

### City Looks for Aid on Homeland Security

July 31, 2003

PAT KROCHMAL - **Des Plaines Times**

Des Plaines officials are seeking more than \$100,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice to help prepare the city in the event of terrorist attack.

Police department officials have submitted an application to the Homeland Security Overtime Program's Office of Community Police Services for \$108,789.

The money would pay for extra manpower during heightened security alerts, extra training for the Tactical Response (SWAT) Team, community relations seminars for residents and first responder training for the whole police force.

The funds are needed because Des Plaines is simply not prepared to deal with such an event, city officials told the Democratic Homeland Security Task Force in Washington, D.C.

"We are more prepared in knowing what to expect and who is responsible for handling different phases of an incident. (But) we are not properly equipped or trained to provide adequate protection to first responders or citizens in the event of a chemical, biological or nuclear terrorist attack," said William Schneider, assistant city manager and director of economic development.

"Ironically, without a federal infusion of dollars, public safety could be jeopardized as a result of homeland security," he added.

Schneider, Des Plaines Acting Police Chief James Prandini, and officials from other communities who were invited to testify before the task force by Ninth District U.S. Rep. **Jan Schakowsky**, D-IL, related the difficult financial choices they must make daily because of the heightened security alerts.

During yellow alert, police and fire personnel maintain normal manpower allocations with an emphasis on terrorism awareness. But during heightened orange and red alerts, the response causes security costs to mount while Des Plaines keeps waiting for state or federal aid that never arrives, Schneider said.

"In an effort to provide proper staffing during orange and red alerts, the police department assigns extra officers to monitor activity at city hall, numerous schools, government buildings, O'Hare International Airport boundaries and other locations identified as potential targets. Overtime staffing for just three officers a week is approximately \$3,820,000," Schneider said.

"In the event of a terrorist attack, overtime staffing will rise dramatically, as all police and fire personnel will be required to adjust schedules. The fire department will incur a weekly overtime expense of more than \$231,000. The police department would add another \$235,00 in overtime expenses per week," he added.

The Des Plaines police department responds to approximately 50,000 calls each year. Extra staffing is required during heightened alert status in an effort to maintain a high standard of police service to the community. Ticket revenue and self-initiated arrest activity has declined as assignments and manpower is diverted in an effort to minimize overtime, Schneider said.

The high threat alerts, which have put officers on guard against terrorism on an overtime basis, have drained the funds marked for other projects, such as the building of a \$13 million police station and the purchase of a new fire truck.

"We currently own the land and have received a grant from the state for \$300,000 to begin design of the police department building. This project is on hold until we get a better

understanding of the homeland security needs of our municipality (because) any changes in personnel or equipment can affect the design of our new facility," Schneider said.

"Another direct result of the shift in resources and training for homeland security, is that (we have had to) delay the purchase of a new fire truck at the cost of \$375,000. The vehicle was slated for replacement last year. We anticipate discussing it at our upcoming budget hearing in August and September," he added.

Mayor Anthony Arredia has indicated that the city will protect the residents at whatever cost, but at some point federal subsidies will be necessary to accomplish the task, Schneider said.

"In the meantime, we also have been delaying other important training programs, such as critical incident response, hazardous materials fire training and first response to weapons of mass destruction. Other forgone training includes normal operation procedures for regular equipment purchases to re-allocate resources towards homeland security initiatives," Schneider said.

So while funding for overtime staffing is important, it is equally important to recognize the funding of equipment and training. Proper equipment and training is imperative for those who first respond to the scene and shortcuts can't be taken. Therefore, the city is planning to buy \$429,900 worth of equipment for the first responders such as police, fire and public works personnel, he added.

"From a municipal viewpoint, congress must listen to the needs of communities and states. Just like the states, municipalities conduct their own terrorist assessment needs and receiving direct federal aid is a critical component to ensuring the safety of their resident," Schneider said.

"That is why the federal government must appropriate the needed homeland security funds to directly aid states and municipalities," he added.

In Congress, the House passed a \$29.4 billion Homeland Security Appropriations bill June 24, which included \$4.4 billion in grants for police, fire and emergency personnel. However, while

the Senate's version of the bill is out of committee, it has not yet reached the floor. So a resolution probably will not be reached until after the August recess, said John Samuels, a Schakowsky aide.

Democrats were denied the opportunity to add an additional \$1 billion for port security, border security, aviation security, maritime security and more than \$88,300, the amount that the 200,000 households in the country with incomes of more than \$1 million would get in their 2004 tax cut, Schakowsky said.

"So far, the Bush administration and the Republican leadership in congress have failed to meet the growing homeland security needs of cities and towns across the country," she added.

The federal government also is shortchanging local communities when it comes to homeland security, Schakowsky said.

"It is time to get federal money to mayors, city managers and first responders - that's where the rubber hits the road. Unless we act now and provide immediate critical federal funds to our local officials, we may be putting our constituents at risk," Schakowsky said.

"Local officials in the ninth congressional district, like Mayor (Anthony) Arredia and others have made it a top priority to protect the people they represent and it is my intention to work in congress to provide them with the federal dollars they need to accomplish this goal," she added.